



PHALACROCORAX LEUCOGASTER, *Gould.*

White-breasted Cormorant.

Phalacrocorax leucogaster, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 156 ; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.

THIS species is very abundant in all the bays and inlets of the sea surrounding Van Diemen's Land ; it ascends the rivers almost to their source, and the large lakes of the interior of the same island are seldom without its presence. It breeds in most of the islands in Bass's Straits, where it constructs a round nest of sea-weed on the ledges of the low rocks, and lays two bluish white eggs. It becomes far less numerous as we proceed northward, but still it inhabits all the localities suitable to it throughout the whole of the coast of South Australia. I have also seen it on the Hunter as well as in Spencer's and St. Vincent's Gulfs.

In a state of nature it is a showy and attractive bird, the decided contrast of the colouring of its plumage rendering it a conspicuous object at a considerable distance, more particularly when it is reposing in flocks on the craggy summits of the low black rocks forming the margins of the rivers, or when perched side by side on the bare branches of the trees overhanging the water. As a matter of course, the whole economy of this species is precisely similar to that of the Cormorants generally.

Its food consists of fish and other marine animals.

The sexes are so nearly alike in their plumage that it is impossible to distinguish them without the aid of dissection ; the spring or nuptial dress, that in which the bird is figured, is characterized by long white feathers springing from the sides of the neck, which feathers are entirely wanting at other seasons. The young of the year has the plumage of the upper surface tinged with brown, and the white of the neck clouded and mottled with the same colour.

Forehead, crown of the head, back of the neck and rump greenish black ; back and wing-coverts deep green, each feather narrowly margined with black ; primaries and secondaries black ; throat, front and sides of the neck, and all the under surface white ; bill and feet black ; naked skin at the base of the bill and round the eye purple ; irides green.

The Plate represents a male and a female about two-thirds of the natural size.